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Panel to probe NSC Contra aid

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The House Intelligence Committee will hold hearings in September to investigate whether the National Security Council violated the law by secretly helping the Nicaraguan resistance forces.

A spokesman for Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., chairman of the panel, said the decision to hold hearings was made after the committee received a letter from Common Cause, which lobbies for liberal causes, asking the panel to investigate "whether the NSC activities violate the letter or spirit of the law."

After news accounts appeared early in August, Reagan administration officials confirmed that a member of the NSC had worked regularly with the resistance fighters, often called the Contras, in coordinating fund raising and planning operations within Nicaragua.

The letter from Common Cause President

Fred Wertheimer cited the Boland Amendment, named after former Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Edward Boland, D-Mass., which has been in effect for fiscal year 1985 while the NSC officer was active.

The Boland amendment, which has since been greatly modified with changes to go into effect on Oct. 1, says that "no funds available to the CIA, Department of Defense or any other agency or entity of the U.S. involved in intelligence activities may be obligated or expended for the purpose, or which would have the effect of supporting, directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua by any nation, group, organization, movement or individual."

The White House has said that no officials have violated the law in this matter.

Congress is currently in recess with the House scheduled to reconvene on Sept. 4.

— Thomas D. Brandt